

LANGUAGE, EDUCATION AND RELIGION FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

A Festschrift in Honour of

PROF. A. G. A. S. OLADOSU

Edited by

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LANGUAGE, EDUCATION AND RELIGION FOR NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract

Translation which is an act of communicating ideas, message and knowledge from one language to another has been a vital tool for knowledge transmission and cultural preservation. Islamic Studies is a branch of knowledge that has Arabic as the original language of its major sources. Thus, in the process of teaching and learning of Islamic Studies most especially in the places other than Arabian countries, translation is used to be one of the composites of Islamic Studies curriculum. Sequel to this fact, this study is geared towards investigating the secondary school students' perception of effectiveness of translation of Arabic texts in learning Islamic studies in Ilorin, Nigeria. The study adopted descriptive method and a questionnaire was used to elicit responses from the respondents. Three research questions were raised and answered in the study. The respondents' opinions to the questionnaire items were used to answer the research questions while frequency counts and percentage distribution were used to analyse the data obtained. The result indicated that translation motivates students to learn Islamic Studies and eventually leads to effective assimilation of Islamic Studies concepts. Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that provision should be made for more translations of Qur'an, Hadith and other sources of Islamic Studies.

Key words: Arabic, Effectiveness, Islamic Studies, Learning, Translation

Introduction

Islamic Studies as a branch of knowledge revolves around teaching and learning of Islamic creeds generally. Thus, Islam has its origin from Arabian Peninsula in the sixth century and had since been spread across the globe. The primary sources of Islamic teachings are Qur'an and Hadith and these two sources have Arabic as their original language in which they are documented. This point however makes the knowledge of Arabic imperative in the teaching and learning of Islamic Studies. More so, the contact of Islam with various people outside Arabia Peninsula and the ultimate yearnings to learn and teach about Islam among diverse group of people and communities have given birth to translation of the great sources of Islamic knowledge i.e. Qur'an and Hadith into various languages. This embarkation has immensely contributed to Islamic scholarship. Hence, this study is intended at investigating empirically how translation of Arabic texts of Qur'an and Hadith has effectively contributed in learning Islamic Studies among secondary school Yoruba Students in Nigeria.

The Arabic Language and Islamic Studies

Arabic is a universally recognized language occupying a position not lower in status and rank to that occupied by English, French or German. It is a tool for political and diplomatic interactions within the United Nations Organizations (UNO), the Organization of African Unity (OAU) now African Union (AU), the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) among others (Oladosu, 2000).

Arabic language is the language of the original Arabs who are inhabitants of Arabian Peninsula (Aljaziratul Al-Arabiyyah). It is also the language of Arabicized nations such as Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and the whole the North Africa. In all of the above countries, Arabic is the language of education, commerce, and politics (Abdurraheem, 2002). It is Arabic alone, of all the Semitic languages, that has gallantly withstood the test of time, gained a wider range of currency and left an indelible mark on the course of world history, culture and civilization. Comparatively, it is also the richest in terms of repertoire of vocabulary, syntactic distribution and elaborateness of verbal forms (Raji, 2002).

With the advent of Islam and, soon to follow, the adoption of Arabic as the lingua franca of the Muslim nation, the currency, diffusion and status of Arabic became enhanced. In the whole of North Africa, it replaced Greek as official language and became even mother tongue for many Greeks, Romans and Berbers not as a Creole but as pure Arabic as a substratum giving rise to different geographical and social dialects in those countries and indeed Mauritania in West Africa. With the advent of Islam to Europe, Arabic replaced Greek in Spain and Southern Portugal with Muslims and Christians using Arabic for all aspects of intellectual endeavours (Abubakre, 2002).

Oladosu (2000) noted that the functional knowledge of Arabic is not only desirable but required of every Islamic Studies teacher because it would afford him or her the opportunity to have deep knowledge of all branches of Islamic Studies, stressing that one of the qualities of a good Islamic Studies teacher is the knowledge of Arabic. Also, the National Teachers Institute (NTI) (2000) stressed that almost all branches of Islamic Studies are written and recorded in Arabic language. Hence, knowledge of Arabic language is essential for deep understanding of Islam. It was believed that no scholar can properly translate and interpret these Islamic branches unless he has a good grasp of Arabic language.

Abdul Raheem (2002) also noted that Arabic language plays important roles in the life of Africans. He added that in Nigeria, the major contributions of Arabic were in the area of eradication of illiteracy and adult education. More so, every Muslim learn how to read, write and speak Arabic because it is the language with which Qur'an was revealed and it is the language of formal worship in Islam. This might be why Raji (2002) stressed that because of the interwoven nature of Arabic with Islam a large number of Muslim, particularly in Nigeria, conceived the study of the language as their exclusive right. The formal religious worship in Islam throughout the world from the time of the prophet Muhammad (SAW) Arabic is being used for daily prayers and other acts of devotion and worship. It is therefore necessary for every Muslim to learn Arabic (Abdur-Rafiu, 2009).

The Concept of Translation and Its Relevance in teaching and learning of Islamic Studies

The connotation of translation as expressed by Adetunji (2010) consists of changing from one form of language to another. The form from which the translation is made will be called the source language and the form into which it is to be changed will be called the receptor language. Thus, translation consists of studying the lexis, grammatical structure, communication situation, and cultural context of the source language text; all these are analyzed in order to determine its meaning. This same meaning is then reconstructed using the lexicon and grammatical structure which are appropriate in the receptor language and its cultural context. Translation also connotes communicative means that is consequential to contacts and interactions between the speakers of different languages. According to Catford (1985) cited in Adetunji (2010), translation is the replacement of textual material in one language by equivalent textual material in another language.

Rachid (2015) submitted that translation is a communicative process which transfers the message of a source language text to a target language. He noted that the general assertion is that translation is being considered as neither a creative art nor an imitative art, but stands somewhere between the two. However, it is a discipline that gives too much importance to structure and meaning. In the view of Osman (2017), translation has to do with a mental activity in which a meaning of given linguistic discourse is rendered from one language to another. It is the act of transferring the linguistic entities from one language in to their equivalents in to another language.

It is pertinent to note that the emphasis in most of the definitions given to translation is that, the primary motive behind the translation is to communicate ideas or message from one source to another. In addition, going through the history of translation would also reveal that earlier attempts to translation were borne out of efforts to communicate ideas from one language to another.

On the importance of translation, Bassnett (2002) when reviewing the relevance of translation in teaching and learning, revealed that the translation of the Scriptures has been playing well established educative roles long before the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and the early vernacular glosses inserted in Latin manuscripts have provided valuable information concerning the development of a number of European languages. She revealed how the importance of translation as a means of spreading understanding had been extolled then. Translation as a writing exercise and as a means of improving oratorical style was an important component in the medieval educational system. Moreover, Bassnett (2002) elucidated further that by stating that Roman theoreticians as Quintilian had advocated and recommended translating from Greek into Latin as a variation on paraphrasing original Latin texts in order to extend and develop the student's imaginative powers.

The translation promotes harmonious interaction and mutual understanding which linguistic differences could have prevented (Adetunji, 2010). According to Bariki (2010), translation helps in interaction among people of different languages. Through translation, details of developments in science, technology, medicine and other fields of knowledge are revealed and spread. Without translation, most of the link with ancient civilizations such as Greece, Egypt and China would have been lost. Moreover, in today's world, the vast movement of people for various reasons such as trade, migration, wars, diplomacy and religion have encouraged translation. Over the years, biblical translation has contributed immensely to translation theory and practice (Bariki, 2010).

Yousefi (2017) found that language of religion is a language that is totally different from the everyday language. It is the language in which certain aspects of everyday language are altered or sometimes suspended. The idea that religious language is the type of language which is used routinely by religious experts so that they can express their beliefs and ideas. Religious texts are the basis of inspirational teachings and by the help of teachings and beliefs human beings are raised to the highest level. Translating religious texts is valuable for the purpose of sharing religious tenets, teachings and history worldwide. Religious texts, documentaries and film, online content and other media are all in need of translation. Translation of religious content is also important for international scholarship in history, theology, and other humanities (<https://blog.stepes.com/sharing-the-word-translation-of-religion-documents/>).

In the practice of teaching and learning Islamic Studies, translation of Arabic texts of major sources of Islamic Studies forms an integral aspect of Islamic Studies. The act of translating Islamic texts is a praiseworthy embarkation. This is because in order to convey the importance of religious texts like the Qur'an to a vast portion of the world's population makes the translation effort more important (Lewis, 2015). Khammyseh (2015) noted that there are many Muslims around the world who use Arabic language as their mothertongue and other non-Arab Muslims who refer to other languages as their second or foreign language, but they need to understand everything about Islam as their religious. Thus, translation is the only way to convert meaning of Islamic expressions into other languages as pledge to continue the message of prophet Mohammad (S.A.W). This view is also in line with the findings of Yousefi (2017) who established that Farsian and Esmaili (2004) and Jahanshahi and Kafipour (2015) shared similar assertion that the spreads of Islam around the world and the

significant increase of number of Muslims justify the inevitability of translation of religious and Islamic texts.

Never the less, in Nigeria for instance, the teaching of Arabic texts of selected chapters of the Qur'an and *ahadith* that are stipulated in Islamic Studies curriculum is followed with the teaching of the translation of the meanings of those selected texts. Apart from the lower basic level of education where the language of instruction is the language of the community as spelt out in the National Policy of Education (2013), the translation is done from Arabic to English. Some of the works that contain translation of Islamic texts that are recommended by the concerned examination bodies for use in Nigerian secondary schools include, The Holy Qur'an (text, translation and commentary) by Yusuf Ali; the meaning of The Glorious Koran (An explanatory translation by Mohammed Marmaduke Picktall) I.P.B., Lagos Nigeria; Islamic Religious knowledge for WASC Book 3 Hadith by Bashir Sambo and Mohammed Higab I.P.B., Lagos, Nigeria; Islamic Religious knowledge for WASC Book 1 Qur'an and Tafsir by Bashir Sambo and Mohammed Higab I.P.B., Lagos, Nigeria; selected traditions of an-Nawawi by M.O.A., Abdul I.P.B., Lagos; AL-'IZZIYYAH for English audience by Quadri Y.A., and Oloyede, I.O. Shebiotimo Publications, Ijebu Ode; Yasin wal-Qur'an – by S.H.A., Malik Ilesanmi Press, Ilesha and 40 Hadith: An Explanation by Dr. Yushau Sodiq Published by J.S. Prinnting, USA in 2011.

Statement of the Problem

The translation method is employed in teaching Islamic Studies in Nigerian schools and the expectation is that this should contribute to students' effective learning of Islamic Studies. However, no research has been carried out to see whether the translation has really contributed to learning Islamic Studies or not. Hence, the present researchers deem it fit to carry out an empirical study to further establish the effectiveness of translation in learning Islamic Studies. This is the gap which this research fills.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of Arabic translation in learning Islamic Studies among secondary school Yoruba students in Nigeria. Specifically, the study looked at:

- i. The extent to which students appreciate learning Islamic Studies through translation
- ii. Students' perception of the validity of translation of Qur'an and Hadith in enhancing their learning of Islamic Studies
- iii. Students' perception on the effectiveness of Arabic translation in enhancing their learning of Islamic Studies

Research Questions

- i. To what extent do students appreciate learning Islamic Studies through translation?
- ii. What is Students' perception of the validity of translation of Qur'an and Hadith in enhancing their learning of Islamic Studies?
- iii. What is the Students' perception on the effectiveness of Arabic translation in enhancing their learning of Islamic Studies?

Methodology

The descriptive method of a survey type was employed in carrying out this research. 500 senior secondary schools students were involved in the study. The population was drawn from 10 secondary schools in Ilorin using simple random sampling technique. Questionnaire was used to elicit information from the respondents. The questionnaire has four sections; A, B, C and D. Section A deals with students' biographical information, and it contains information of respondents' institution, gender, and Local Government Area. Section B of the instrument deals with items related to (students' appreciation of translation), Section C deals with the students' perception of the (validity of translation of Arabic texts of Qur'an and Hadith). While Section D deals with items on students' perception of the (effectiveness of translation of Arabic texts in learning Islamic studies). The three sections (B, C and D) constituted fifteen items with three sub-headings on top of the items. The expected responses were

also structured along a modified. Like classification - SA (Strongly Agree), A (Agree), D (Disagree) and SD (Strongly Disagree).

To ascertain the validity of the instrument, face and content validity was established by three experts from the fields of Islamic Studies Education and Measurement and Test construction. There after the reliability of the instrument was obtained through split half method. The data gathered was analysed using frequency counts and percentage distribution.

Data Analysis and Findings

Tables 1 - 3 show the results of the analysis of the data obtained from the questionnaire. They were used to answer the research questions.

Table 1: Reactions of the Respondents to the Questionnaire Items That Provides Answers to Research Question 1 (Students' Appreciation of Translation)

ITEMS	SA	%	A	%	D	%	SD	%	Total	%
1. Most students found translation of Qur'an interesting	405	81	67	13.4	23	4.6	05	0.1	500	100
2. The translation of Hadith parts of Islamic Studies is a lovely embarkation	465	93	30	6	05	0.1	nil	nil	500	100
3. Most students love the inclusion of translation of Arabic texts of Qur'an in Islamic Studies	480	96	19	3.8	01	0.02	nil	nil	500	100
4. Most students love the Inclusion of translation of Arabic texts of Hadith in Islamic Studies	475	96	22	4.4	03	0.06	nil	nil	500	100

It could be seen from table 1 that the 405 (81%) of the respondents strongly agreed to item 1 of the questionnaire, 67 (13.4%) agreed, 23 (4.6%) disagreed and 05 (0.1%) strongly disagreed. Also, 465 (93%) strongly agreed to item 2 of the questionnaire, 30 (6%) agreed and 05 (0.1%) disagreed. On item 3 of the questionnaire, 480 (96%) strongly agreed, 19 (3.8%) agreed and 01 (0.02%) disagreed. While 475 (96%) strongly agreed to item 4 of the questionnaire, 22 (4.4%) agreed and 03 (0.06%) disagreed. It could however be seen that the higher percentage of the respondents agreed to items (1-4) of the questionnaire. Thus, this shows that the majority of the respondents subscribed to the fact that Yoruba students immensely appreciate learning Islamic Studies through translation of the Arabic texts in Islamic Studies. Hence, this provides answer for research question 1. That is the extent to which Yoruba students appreciate learning Islamic Studies through translation is attractive, fascinating and demanding.

Table 2: Reactions of the Respondents to the Questionnaire Items That Provides Answers to Research Question 2 (validity of translation of Arabic texts of Qur'an and Hadith)

ITEMS	SA	%	A	%	D	%	SD	%	Total	%
5. The language used to translate Arabic texts of Qur'an and Hadith in the ISS Textbooks is simple	393	78.6	41	8.2	47	9.4	19	3.8	500	100
6. The words used in the translation of the Arabic texts of Qur'an and Hadith are self-explanatory	385	77	58	11.6	33	6.6	24	4.8	500	100
7. The sentences used in the translation of Arabic texts of	404	80.8	57	11.4	39	7.8	nil	nil	500	100

Qur'an and Hadith follow
a lexical order

8. The structural arrangement of words and sentences used in the translation of Qur'an and Hadith follow a logical order	397	79.4	41	8.2	43	8.6	19	3.8	500	100
9. The English words used in the translation of Arabic texts of Qur'an and Hadith are suitable equivalents	308	61.4	91	18.2	80	16	21	4.2	500	100

It could be seen from table 2 that the 393 (78.6%) of the respondents strongly agreed to item 5 of the questionnaire, 41 (8.2%) agreed, 47 (9.4%) disagreed and 19 (3.8%) strongly disagreed. Also, 385 (77%) strongly agreed to item 6 of the questionnaire, 58 (11.6%) agreed, 33 (6.6%) disagreed and 24 (4.8%) strongly disagreed. More so, 404 (80.8%) strongly agreed to item 7 of the questionnaire, 57 (11.4%) agreed and 39 (7.8%) disagreed. While 397 (79.4%) strongly agreed to item 8 of the questionnaire, 41 (8.2%) agreed, 43 (8.6%) disagreed and 19 (3.8%). Also, 308 (61.4%) strongly agreed to item 9 of the questionnaire, 91 (18.2%) agreed, 80 (16%) disagreed and 21 (4.2%). It could be seen from table 2 that the percentage of those that agreed to the items 5-9 is higher than those who disagreed. It could therefore be deduced that majority of the students subscribed to the validity of the translation of the Arabic texts of Islamic Studies. Hence, this provides answer for research question 2.

Table 3: Reactions of the Respondents to the Questionnaire Items That Provides Answers to Research Question 3 (effectiveness of translation of Arabic texts in learning Islamic studies)

ITEMS	SA	%	A	%	D	%	SD	%	Total	%
10. The translation of Arabic texts of Qur'an and Hadith in English enhances better understanding of the meaning of Qur'an and Hadith texts	491	98.2	09	1.8	nil	nil	nil	nil	500	100
11. The translation of Arabic texts of Qur'an and Hadith makes learning of Islamic Studies interesting	488	97.6	12	2.4	nil	nil	nil	nil	500	100
12. The translation of Arabic texts of Qur'an and Hadith makes learning of Islamic Studies efficient and effective	479	95.8	21	4.2	nil	nil	nil	nil	500	100
13. The inclusion of translation of Arabic texts of Qur'an and Hadith in Islamic Studies curriculum motivates students to learn Islamic Studies	408	81.6	82	16.4	nil	nil	nil	nil	500	100
14. The translation of Arabic texts of Qur'an and Hadith facilitates Students' assimilation of Islamic Studies lessons	393	78.6	66	13.2	41	8.2	nil	nil	500	100
15. The translation of Arabic texts of Qur'an and Hadith enhances students' appreciation of the teachings of Islam	308	61.6	80	16	71	14.2	41	8.2	500	100

It could be seen from table 3 that the 491 (98.2 %) of the respondents strongly agreed to item 10 of the questionnaire and 09 (1.8%) agreed. Also, 488 (97.6%) strongly agreed to item 11 of the questionnaire and 12 (2.4%) agreed. More so, 479 (95.8%) strongly agreed to item 12 of the questionnaire and 21 (4.2%) agreed. While 408 (81.6%) strongly agreed to item 13 of the questionnaire and 82 (16.4%) agreed. Also, 393 (78.6%) strongly agreed to item 14 of the questionnaire, 66 (13.2%) agreed and 41 (8.2%) disagreed. More so, 308 (61.6%) strongly agreed to item 15 of the questionnaire, 80 (16%) agreed, 71 (14.2%) disagree and 41 (8.2%) strongly disagreed. It could be seen from table 3 that the percentage of those that agreed to the items 10-15 is higher than those who disagreed. It could therefore be inferred that majority of the students subscribed to the fact that the translation of the Arabic texts of Islamic Studies promotes effective learning of Islamic Studies. Hence, this provides answer for research question 3.

Discussion

The findings of this study revealed that translation of Qur'an and Hadith for secondary school Yoruba students is an enthusiastic embarkation. This is similar to the submission of Bariki (2010) who established how translation of religious scripts especially bible have attracted the interest of many people at different time. In addition, the finding of the present study is also a further attestation to the view of Lewis (2015) who asserted that the essence and essential nature of the Qur'an makes its translation to various world languages an imperative.

The outcome of this study also revealed that perception of the students about the validity of the translation was that the way and manner of the translation done in Islamic Studies classes is also appreciative and understandable. The words and styles of the translation adopted seem to be in concord with the students' mental qualities and abilities. The result indicated that translation motivates students to learn Islamic Studies and eventually leads to effective assimilation of Islamic Studies concepts.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Translation has been portrayed in this work as the act of rendering of meaning of an idea, body of knowledge or message from a source language into a target language. Translation is as old as man and translation of religious literature has been an integral part of translation activities that are being carried out over the years. Thus, this work was carried out to empirically ascertain effectiveness of Arabic translation in learning Islamic Studies. It was however revealed that secondary school Yoruba student show appreciative reaction to the inclusion of translation in the senior secondary school Islamic Studies curriculum and that the translation has contributed in promoting effective learning of Islamic Studies. In line with the outcome of this study, this paper is concluded by recommending that the professionals in the fields of Arabic and Islamic Studies should endeavour to and come up with more translation of Qur'an, Hadith and other sources of Islamic Studies. Also, the teachers of Islamic Studies should adopt captivating styles and techniques in the course of teaching Islamic Studies through translation. Teachers of Islamic studies should assist in selecting Islamic Studies textbooks with good translation of Qur'an and Hadith contents. At the training level, teacher trainees in the field of Islamic Studies should be equipped and get acquainted with functional knowledge of Arabic and principles of translation so as enable them handle the teaching properly after their training. The Muslim philanthropists, organizations and even government should assist in providing financial grants that would ease publications of translated materials on Islamic Studies. It is pertinent to let students understand that despite the fact that translation boosts their learning of Islamic Studies, cautions should be exercised by not neglecting the Arabic aspects as relying solely on translation only would do more harm than benefit.

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